

# The Style Invitational

## WEEK 318: HYPHEN THE TERRIBLE

**birth-less** — *adj.*, a word used to describe Adam and Eve.

**follow-ween** — *n.*, November 1.

**hard-day** — *n.*, Wednesday.

**offend-lite** — *n.*, a minor social indiscretion, such as a dainty belch.

**follow-less** — *n.*, the act of leaving a trail of pebbles instead of breadcrumbs, a la Hansel & Gretel

**care-lite** — *n.*, services offered by an HMO



**This week's contest:** Combine the first half of any hyphenated word in a story in today's paper with the second part of a different hyphenated word from the same story, and provide a new definition. The examples above are from today's Miss Manners column. Make sure you tell us from which story your words were chosen. The first-prize winner receives an original painting of two toy poodles seated on a chair, donated by the prestigious Annie Groer Collection. This painting is framed in cheap wood that has been singed by a soldering iron for that classic "cheap wood singed by a soldering iron" look. For a review of the artwork itself, we approached Paul Richard,

The Washington Post's art critic. Paul believes that all art is an effort to summon the unseen, and therefore is worthy of respect; he will never flatly declare any piece to be "bad." (That would be cruel, he says, "like calling a disfigured person ugly.") So we challenged him to examine this painting and not call it "bad." He scrutinized it, paying particular attention to the brushstrokes, which appeared to have been rendered with a paintbrush from Home Depot. He examined the use of color, which appeared to be influenced by Crayola. His verdict: "You may quote me as follows: It is *poignantly* bad."

First runner-up gets the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up receive the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Winners will be selected on the basis of humor and originality. Mail your entries to the Style Invitational, Week 318, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071; fax them to 202-334-4312; or submit them via e-mail to this address: losers@washpost.com. E-mail users: Please indicate the week number in the "subject" field. Also, please do not append "attachments," which tend not to be read. Entries must be received on or before Monday, April 26. Important: Please include your postal address and phone number. Winners will be announced three weeks from today. Editors reserve the right to alter entries for taste, humor or appropriateness. No purchase necessary. Today's Ear No One Reads was written by Russell Beland of Springfield. Employees of The Washington Post and members of their immediate families are not eligible for prizes.

### REPORT FROM WEEK 315,

in which we asked you to write a rhyming poem about any one of five mundane subjects: cheese, bellybuttons, Nyquil, the lint trap in a dryer, or U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky.

But first: For the second time in two months, we have received word that a recent winning entry was not original. The concept of a store named "The Caveat Emptorium" evidently first appeared in an obscure novel published many years ago. The book was titled, er, "Gone With the Wind." Anyway, we debriefed the individual who submitted the entry, applied electrodes to his moist areas, etc., and became convinced he had never before heard the expression, and was guiltless of theft; indeed, no male human being on Earth has ever actually read "GWTW." Still, we hereby issue this warning: Don't submit an entry if you think you might have maybe perhaps heard it somewhere before, like from your Uncle Phil. Because your Uncle Phil is an idiot, and he probably stole it from Soupy Sales. Remember: If you submit a plagiarized entry under your name, it is not your Uncle Phil who will be humiliated in print and have to move to Tibet.

Back to the poems:

#### ◆ Fourth Runner-Up:

**A mouse in the house has been running amuck  
I've poisoned and glue-trapped and such with no luck.  
I've patched all the mouse holes with galvanized tin.  
I can't understand how that rodent gets in.  
The lint trap! That's it! He gets in through the vent!  
So I plugged up the gap with some Portland cement  
Which clogged up the lint trap, igniting the house.  
Now I'm out of the street—but I'm rid of the mouse.**  
(Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

#### ◆ Third Runner-Up:

**I go to Europe feeling hurt that cheese is  
thought of as dessert.  
The Frenchman mutters "quelle dommage" if  
parted from his swell fromage.  
The English love their Double Gloucester;  
He who doesn't? An impoucestier!  
The Spaniard too (I heard one say so) will  
sometimes end his meal *con queso*.  
Cheese or sweets? Or will it do to have  
my cakes and Edam, too?**  
(David Smith, Berkeley, Calif.)

#### ◆ Honorable Mentions:

**A Grecian urn? That I can see.  
Flanders poppies? Yessirree.  
Yet Shakespeare, Shelley, Byron, Milton  
Never wrote of Brie or Stilton  
Why their silence? 'Tis, methinks  
A simple fact: The stuff just stinks.  
There's never been, since Chaucer's times,  
A good word with which "putrid" rhymes.**  
(Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

**The lint trap in a dryer  
Does much we can admire  
But it does almost nuttin'  
Compared to a bellybutton.**  
(Howard Walderman, Columbia)

**The enemy flu, the charlatan Cold,  
Quick! My hero, brave and bold —  
Away the fever! Clear the head!  
Take me, Nyquil! Share my bed!**  
(Mary Von Drehle, Wheaton)

**If you eat cheese in your car  
And follow up with a cigar,  
The smell, I fear, will surely stay.  
And stink up your Chevy au Lait.**  
(Marian Carlsson, Lexington)

**"Ode to a Lint Trap"  
Unsung by choir or chorus  
Unknown to screen or print  
Yet you have gathered for us  
A thousand pints of lint.**  
(Josh Calder, Washington)

**Gorgonzola vs. Muenster would be a groovy  
Cheesy Japanese monster movie.**  
(Susan Reese, Arlington)

**The vice president loves paperbacks—  
Thrillers by assorted hacks.  
But lately he's been seen to sup  
Alone with "J'Accuse." What's up?  
There he dines on cheese and cola.  
Good Lord—has Mr. Gorgonzola?**  
(Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

#### ◆ Second Runner-Up:

**Charlene Barshefsky, trading chief.  
I would not trade thee for Janet Reno  
Or a slab of bacon, or a side of beef  
Some ripe bananas, or a case of Beano.  
Nor e'en for a furry toilet seat  
That hosted many pompous derrieres.  
Thou art my Love; thou aren't swap meat.  
I just wish you would lower your barriers.**  
(Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

#### ◆ First Runner-Up:

**Of bellybuttons we shall never tire.  
Rub two together, and start a fire.**  
(Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

**◆ And the winner of the  
ashtray from Graceland:  
When I ran over our pet hamster  
I felt like such a fool.  
How could I undo this mess  
Ere the kids returned from school?  
A little daub of Mr. Clean  
Took bloodstains from the tire.  
And the hamster was replaced  
From the lint trap in the dryer.**  
(Niels Hoven, Silver Spring)

**The coolness people fake will  
Never perfectly disguise;  
Her business suit says "Dayquil"  
But there's Nyquil in her eyes.**  
(David Smith, Berkeley, Calif.)

**Advice to a Young Man Starting Out in the  
Business World:  
Don't drink Nyquil.  
Keep a dry quill.  
A pen can't think well,  
In the inkwell.**  
(Roy Ashley, Washington)

**The spinning clothes are many hues,  
I change my outfit once a day.  
I favor yellows, greens and blues.  
How does the trap turn all to gray?**  
(Betsy J. Rosenblatt, Washington)

**Barshefsky is a clunky name  
Too odd and foreign for lasting fame.  
Unless she has legs like Dietrich (Marlene)  
I see no hope for our Brainy Charlene.**  
(Bob Dennis, Flint Hill)

**When I ordered Whopper with Cheese,  
They said, "Have it your way." Oh, please.  
Should I get arty  
And ask for Havarti?  
Nah. Just: "Hold the e.coli disease."**  
(Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

**◆ And the Rookie of the Week:  
Bellybutton—outie, innie.  
Source of humor—mysteries many.  
Poke it hard with finger, single;  
Nether regions tickle, tingle.  
When you're heavy—huge, hollow.  
If you're skinny—flat, shallow.  
Twentysomething—sexy, charming.  
Ninety something—loose, alarming.**  
(Jackie Binder, Charlottesville)

Next Week: Calling The Toon